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ISLAMIC TERROR IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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Preface

The September 11th 2001 attack on New York and Washington DC awakened the United States and the rest of the world to the threat of global terrorism and its most virulent strain: Radical Islamist terror groups. Literally overnight, military and civilian government organizations were forced to retool themselves to face this asymmetrical threat. Nowhere was this more evident than in the US Pacific Command, where the time-honored focus on China and North Korea was shifted southward towards long-simmering but neglected threats from Muslim groups in the Philippines, Thailand and a heretofore unknown group called Jemaah Islamiyah. My unit, the Pacific Air Forces Air Intelligence Squadron, was no exception. While we successfully climbed a steep learning curve to provide actionable intelligence to our commanders and deployed forces, my own frenetic schedule prevented me from doing more in-depth of Islamic terror in Southeast Asia, its root causes, motivations, the region's response to this growing threat. With the blessing of time that accompanied my one-year Fellowship at Georgetown University, I decided to return to this topic to learn more on the current state of the terrorist threat and the regions' as well as the US' efforts to cope with it.

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Abstract

This paper examines the threat posed by Islamic terrorist groups in Southeast Asia and steps being taken by individual nations, regional security organizations, and the United States to combat them. It begins with a brief discussion of the origins of Radical Islam in the region and contextual factors that contributed to its rise and sustainment. Second, the paper will examine individual terrorist groups in the Philippines, Thailand, and Jemaah Islamiyah, a regional terrorist organization operating primarily in Indonesia but with links throughout the region. While this is far from an all-inclusive list of regional terrorist or insurgent groups, these are the primary focus of regional and US concern. The paper also discusses links between Southeast Asian terror groups and al-Qaeda. Next, it examines efforts by individual states and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to combat this threat, their challenges, and additional steps that need to be taken. Finally, the paper examines the US response to the threat. Using the prism of the National Strategy for Combating Terror it addresses US efforts to identify and defeat terrorists and deny them sanctuary while diminishing the underlying causes of terror and support, describing its effectiveness and identifying additional to be taken to win the war on "Terrors' Second Front"

Chapter 1

Introduction

Brothers and sisters let us hope for and be conscious of the defense of Islam. Let us embark on jihad for Allah, let us struggle to implement the law of Allah and let us apply a unity within ourselves between Muslims.

— Jemaah Islamiyah spiritual leader Abu Bakar Bashir[1]

On September 9 2004, a massive bomb exploded outside the Australian Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia. The third major blast in less than two years, the bombing claimed 12 lives and injured another 150. More importantly, it demonstrated that three years after Southeast Asia was declared a "second front" in the US-led Global War on Terror, radical Islamic groups still pose a grave threat regional security.

To be fair, both Southeast Asian countries and the US had to climb steep learning curves in the past three years. Regional intelligence analysts and security experts were virtually unaware of Jemaah Islamiyah's existence until shortly after the September 11th attacks, as their focus was on more traditional, long-standing security threats such as North Korea and China. Entire intelligence agencies had to be reorganized and re-educated to better understand regional terrorist groups. Military and law enforcement entities had to determine how to apply their resources to defeat the threat. Perhaps the most challenging aspect was attempting to convince reluctant states to harness their own resources to protect themselves. A lot of progress has been made over the past three years: terrorist cells were broken up, their leadership arrested or forced to flee, numerous

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plots were foiled, and countless lives were saved. While these successes are important, the continuing terrorist attacks in the Philippines, Thailand and Indonesia demonstrate that terrorists retain their lethal capability and that there is more work to be done.

This paper examines the threat posed by Islamic terrorist groups in Southeast Asia and steps being taken by individual nations, regional security organizations, and the United States to combat them. It begins by discussing the increasing influence of fundamentalist Islam on an otherwise moderate population of Muslims and the underlying sources of discontent that causes more virulent forms of Islam to fester.

The paper then examines the origins, motivations and links between individual terrorist groups in the Philippines and Thailand as well as Jemaah Islamiyah, a regional terrorist group responsible for bombings in Indonesia and elsewhere. The paper also discusses links between Southeast Asian terror groups and al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden's motivation for expanding his terror network into a region known for its secularism and plurality. It is important to note that this is not an all-inclusive "Rogues Gallery". There are more terrorists and radical separatist groups in the region, both Islamic and non-Islamic, than can be addressed in the limited scope this paper. Therefore the paper will focus on terrorist groups that are a primary regional and US concern.

Next, the paper examines efforts by individual states and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to combat this threat, their challenges, and additional steps that need to be taken. Finally, the paper examines the US response to the threat. Using the prism of the National Strategy for Combating Terror it addresses US efforts to identify and defeat terrorists and deny them sanctuary while diminishing the underlying causes of

terror and support, describing its effectiveness and identifying additional measures to be

taken to win the war on "Terrors' Second Front."

Figure 1: Map of Southeast Asia

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Chapter 2

Radical Islam in Southeast Asia

As a Muslim, I have a conviction that I have to defend oppressed Muslims,
as stipulated in the Koran.

— Confessed Bali bomber Imam Samudra[2]

At first glance, Southeast Asia seems an unlikely location for radical Islam. Islam as practiced in the region has had a tradition of tolerance and peaceful coexistence with the other great religions of the region since it was introduced by Yemeni traders in the twelfth century.   The overwhelming majorities of Muslims in Southeast Asia are peaceful, tolerant and are repulsed by the violence carried out in the name of their religion. Most are products of a secular education system and oppose the establishment of Islamic regimes governed by *shariah*, or Islamic law.[3]   Unlike the repressive monarchies, dictatorships and theocracies of the Middle East, their governments are also secular, and all practice some semblance of democracy and market economics.

Rise of Militant Islam

While the majority of Muslims in the region are secular, Southeast Asia has been influenced by the rising fundamentalist Islam in the Middle East. This is not a new phenomenon; more fundamentalist versions of Islam, such as Wahhabism, have been brought back to the region by *hajj* pilgrims and students studying in the Middle East

since the 16th century.[4]   More recently, fundamentalism has emerged in the region through the *Salafiyyah* movement, whose adherents seek to return Islam to its purest form as practiced by the Prophet Mohammad and the first two generations of followers.[5] While Sydney Jones of the International Crisis Group points out that Salafism is generally a non-violent movement, Kumar Ramakrishna of the Center for Strategic and International Studies contends the threat comes from the neo-salafist*s*, who blend the traditional return-to-roots fundamentalism with the ideational threat of Islam under siege from Christian, Zionist and secular forces.[6]   To many, the only way to lift the siege and establish a pure Islamic state is though *jihad.*

Several factors make Southeast Asia fertile soil for neo-salafists.   The first is the influence of returning Southeast Asians who fought in Afghanistan.   While exact numbers are non-existent, over 1000 Muslims from the region are believed to have fought with the Mujahadeen.[7]   Many of these *jihadis* were exposed to fundamentalist thought in *madrassas* (Islamic schools) or training camps in Pakistan and Afghanistan.   After returning home, the *jihadis* passed on these new-found beliefs through their mosques, by establishing *madrassas* of their own or by encouraging others to travel to Pakistan, Saudi Arabia or Egypt to study "pure" Islam.

The second factor is the influence of fundamentalist Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia and wealthy individuals on the education of Southeast Asian Muslims. The Islamic principle of *zakat* prescribes all Muslims donate 2.5% of their net revenue to charity. Much of this revenue is pooled for charitable work such as Mosque construction and schools around the world. Overflowing oil revenue also enabled wealthy Muslim states to subsidize educations for thousands of Southeast Asian youths at overseas Islamic

universities. Thousands more were exposed to *salafist* ideas through *madrassas* and *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) built in the region by Saudi Arabia. These schools came with one catch, though: The curriculum had to be based on the strict Wahhabi form of Islam as opposed to the indigenous *Sufi* or a more moderate form of *Sunni* Islam.[8]

The third reason for increased fundamentalist influence is a sense of economic deprivation felt by many Muslims in the region. The Southeast Asian economic boom that lasted from the 1970s until the late 1990s brought unprecedented prosperity to the region. For example, poverty rates in Malaysia between 1970 and 1990 dropped from 18% to 2%, while in Indonesia, poverty declined from 60% in 1970 to 11% in 1996.[9] However, this prosperity and the accompanying urbanization, modernism, and westernization created a sense of alienation from traditional values, and drew many Muslims back into the mosques and Islamic study groups to reconnect with their roots.

The subsequent 1997 collapse of the Southeast Asian economy brought many more Muslims back to the Mosque. Overnight, millions were unemployed and savings and investment accounts were wiped out. Many university-educated technocrats were laid off, and new graduates faced bleak employment prospects. This led some Muslims to blame their governments, the West, and secular modernism in general for their woes, and drew many back to their religious roots in search of answers. Additionally, declining government budgets brought on by the financial crisis sapped funds for public education, leading scores of Muslims to turn to the madrassas and pesantrens as a source of free or subsidized education for their children, while also providing them with discipline and an infusion of Islamic values.[10]

The fourth reason for the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the region is a heightened sense of humiliation felt by Muslims. Increased Islamic consciousness brought on by the reasons described above has increased identification with the pure "Muslim core" of the Middle East, where they see the plight of Iraqis, Afghans and most importantly the Palestinians suffering under an incessant war waged by "Crusaders and Zionists".[11] Media outlets such as al-Jazeera and an explosion of Islamic web pages shape their worldview of America and the West at war with Islam. Rather than a victim of senseless terror, America is portrayed as a bully and partner in an unholy alliance bent of their religion. Indeed, polling indicated that 82 percent of Indonesians were disappointing Saddam Hussein did not fight harder in 2003, or that the cost of victory wasn't higher for America.[12]

Finally, the growth of fundamentalism in the region was abetted by past authoritarian regimes. The military-backed governments of Suharto in Indonesia, Marcos in the Philippines and, to a lesser extent, the military regimes in Thailand ruled for much of the last three decades using persecution, arbitrary arrests and violence against real and perceived opponents. Muslim fundamentalists were often suppressed and prohibited from political activity. This oppression radicalized many regime opponents, such as Indonesia's Abu Bakar Bashir, and strengthened the power and influence of the clergy, as the mosque became the only acceptable social outlet for Islamists. It also fueled their anger against the US, who espoused democracy while supporting the regimes that oppressed them.[13]

Chapter 3

Regional Terrorist Groups

The Koran is to build our people; the gun destroys the obstacles that stand in our way. We cannot separate them.

Jemaah Islamiyah recruiter Abu Jabril[14]

Philippines

The Moro rebellion is the largest and most persistent of the armed Islamic separatist movements in the region. The roots of the conflict date back to the arrival of Spanish forces in the Philippines in 1565 and their battle against the indigenous Muslim tribes (dubbed "Moros" by Spain after the Moorish forces they drove from Europe a half century earlier). After defeating the Moros in the north, they spent the next 350 years unsuccessfully attempting to subdue them in Mindanao and the Sulu Islands.[15] After taking control of the Philippines in 1898, the US also tried to subdue to Moros. Led by General "Black Jack" Pershing, the US brutally suppressed Muslim rebels and imposed martial law in the region. The brutality of this war, which killed over 250,000 people, remains a source of bitter resentment and mistrust among the Moro towards the US to this day. Additionally, the US encouraged the migration of landless Catholic peasants from the north; giving them titles to land that were occupied by Muslims. This settlement policy continued after Philippine independence, and was exacerbated by a peace settlement between the government and communist Huk Guerillas. As part of the

settlement, the Huks were also given land titles in the south. As a result, by the 1960s, the Moros became a minority group in their traditional homeland.[16]

The Moro's resentment was compounded by a long-standing policy of neglect by Manila. As a religious minority in an overwhelmingly catholic country, Muslims have been ignored by the central government. This has led to underdevelopment, massive unemployment, and lack of investment in health, education and infrastructure. For example, the current per capita gross domestic product on the Moro South is about $264 per year; less than one-tenth of Filipinos living in the Luzon region.[17] By every measure of human development, such as poverty, literacy, and infant mortality rates, the inhabitants of the south Philippines lag behind their compatriots.[18] This sense of hopelessness and frustration led some Moros to believe that secession was the only alternative and were willing to wage *jihad* to achieve it.

Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF)

The MNLF emerged in 1969. Led by Nur Misuari, the MNLF sought to establish an independent Muslim state in the southern Philippines governed by *shariah*. Funded and equipped by oil-rich and sympathetic countries such as Libya, the MNLF waged a bitter civil war against the Philippine Armed Forces, leaving over 100,000 dead and displacing 500,000 from their homes. Facing a rising death toll, the government entered into negotiations with the rebels. The result was the 1976 Tripoli Agreement, where Misuari accepted limited autonomy for 13 of Mindanao's 21 provinces, but not outright independence.[19] The civil war continued for another twenty years, until a fragile truce was reached. However, breakaway factions continued to claim responsibility for attacks

in the name of the MNLF. In 2001 one of these factions, led by former-MNLF chief Misuari attacked an army base in the south, resulting in over 100 deaths.[20]

Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF)

Another breakaway faction from the truce was the MILF. Angered that MNLF leaders had "sold out" Moro aspirations of a separate Islamic homeland in exchange for peace and government positions, Hashim Selemat formed the MILF in the early 1980s. It took up arms in 1986, engaging the army in small-scale clashes and bombing attacks on government and commercial targets. By the early 1990s, it was the largest Moro rebel group, and now controls large swaths of 7 provinces in Mindanao with a claimed strength of over 120,000 fighters.[21] Like the MNLF, the MILF reached a peace accord with the government in 2001. However, the MILF and government frequently clash in Mindanao, and the MILF often responds to these skirmishes by conducting terrorist attacks (usually blamed on a "splinter faction"), such as the March 2003 attack on the Davao airport.[22] The government's desire to keep the peace with the MILF has kept the group off the US' and UN's lists of international terrorist groups, despite having perhaps the strongest links to regional and global *jihadist* groups in the Philippines.

Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG)

Like the MILF the ASG was spawned by outrage over the MNLF's accord with the government. Founded by Abdurajak Janjalani and Abubakar (Khadaffy) Janjalani in 1991, it opposed any accommodation with either the government or local Christians and emerged as a small but extremely violent terrorist group.[23] It has carried out countless bombings, kidnappings, and guerrilla attacks against both government and civilian targets. It is also capable of striking beyond its strongholds in Sulu and Baslilan Island,

including bombing targets in Manila. After Abdurajak Janjalani was killed in a clash with the Philippine Army in 1998, his brother Khadaffy took over the organization. The group subsequently degenerated into a kidnap-for-ransom criminal organization, and achieved notoriety through the kidnapping of tourists and aid workers, including three US citizens. One American, Martin Burnham, was killed in a rescue attempt by Philippine forces in July 2002.[24] In spite of an overall strength of less than 300-500 fighters, it remains the most active violent terrorist group in the Philippines, conducting bombings and hit-and-run attacks on a regular basis. After these attacks, ASG rebels often seek sanctuary in MILF-held areas, knowing that the military is reluctant to pursue them due to the fragile truce agreement. Additionally, some analysts believe Janjalani and the ASG are attempting to shed its criminal mantle and reassert it commitment to Jihad, in hopes of gaining popular support and aid from other terrorist groups.[25]

Indonesia

Unlike the Philippines, Indonesian Muslims are not a suppressed minority. Muslims account for about 90% of Indonesia's population of 180 million, making it the world's largest Muslim country. Like the Philippines, however, Indonesia's radical Islamic fringe is largely the product of the increased infusion of fundamentalist thought brought by returning *jihadis*, economic woes, and a history of suppression by the government.

The roots of Indonesian radical Islam date back to the colonial period, when the Dutch suppressed Islamic leaders they deemed to be a threat to their rule. In response, two militant groups, Muhammadiyah and Serekat Islam were founded in 1912, and were quickly suppressed by colonial forces. The Nahdlatul Ulema (NU) was created in 1926 in

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reaction to modernist Islamic organizations that challenged the authority of traditional Islamic leaders.[26]

When the Japanese occupied Indonesia in 1941, they used Islam as a political tool against the Allies. They established the Office of Religious Affairs, which was given authority over Islamic issues at the local level. In 1943, the Japanese created the pan-Islamic Masjumi party, which was committed to making Islam the official state religion. After the war, Masjumi emerged as the leading political party in the war of independence against the Dutch, based largely on its Muslim credentials.[27] Their aspirations of an Islamic state were quickly dashed by the ascendancy of nationalist forces under General Sukarno to power. Sukarno intended to establish Indonesia as a secular state ruled by constitutional vice *shariah law.* In response, Islamists began the Darul Islam movement in 1948 and for a time fought both the Dutch and Nationalist forces. Their rebellion lasted until August 1962, when their leader, Maridjan Kartsoewirjo was captured. While Islamic parties were allowed to participate in the political process, their hopes for a *shariah*-based state were dashed.[28]

In 1965, the Muslim parties threw their support behind General Suharto's military coup and his battle against communist rebels. Once he consolidated power, however, he suppressed the power of Muslim parties and outlawed attempts to establish an Islamic State. In 1973, Suharto forced all Muslim parties to merge into a single Partai Persatuan Pembangen (United Development Party of PPP) and made them solely dependent on the government for funding. Ironically, this suppression bolstered Islam's power as a social force, as the mosque provided a safe alternative social outlet to politics.[29] It also forced some Islamic leaders into exile, where their power and embracement of *jihad* grew.

Jemaah Islamiyah (JI)

Two such leaders were Abu Bakar Bashir and Abdullah Sungkar, who established the Jemaah Islamiyah network.. Considering themselves the heirs of the Darul Islam Movement, the two openly advocated the establishment of *shariah* law. In the 1970s they established Al Mukim, a boarding school in Solo that preached the puritanical Wahhabi interpretation of Islam which became an incubator for literally dozens of JI terrorists. The two were arrested in 1978 for violating the Subversion Law and jailed for four years. After their release, Bashir continued his vitriolic attacks against the regime, especially following the 1984 massacre of Muslim protestors by the army. In response to this tragedy, Bashir is believed to have encouraged a series of bombings in 1984-1985. In 1985, Bashir and Sungkar fled to Malaysia, where they set up a base of operations to preach their fundamentalist ideals and recruit Indonesian and Malaysians for the Afghan Jihad.[30]

Bashir and Sungkar formed JI in 1993 or 1994 with the goal of establishing an Islamic state in Southeast Asia ruled by *shariah*. They established links with regional terrorist groups such as the ASG and MILF and external groups such as al Qaeda for recruitment, training and planning of terrorist operations in Southeast Asia. Their ambitions received a major boost in 1998 when the Suharto regime collapsed in the wake of the Asian financial crisis. The establishment of democracy gave formerly restricted Muslim groups unprecedented freedom to operate. Bashir and Sungkar returned to Indonesia preaching and organizing in relative openness.[31]

JI received another shot in the arm in 1999 with the outbreak of Muslim-Christian violence in Ambon (in the Malukus) and Poso, as it brought the *jihad* home to Indonesia. JI was able to recruit and train indigenous *Mujahadeen* for the conflict, in which

hundreds of Christians and Muslims died.[32] After the violence ebbed, many *jihadis* remained active in the Bashir network to further its goal of replacing the secular post-Suharto democracy with a theocracy that would encompass not only Indonesia, but Malaysia, Brunei, southern Thailand and the southern Philippines.

In 2000, there was a spate of terrorist attacks around the region, beginning with the bombing of a train station and hotel in southern Thailand in April, a mall in Jakarta in July and an attempted assassination of the Philippines ambassador to Indonesia in August. In December, over 30 churches were bombed in Indonesia as was a train station in Manila.[33] At the time, regional security services saw no links between these attacks, blaming them instead on local terrorist groups. It would be another year before investigators realized this was the opening volley of a regional terrorist network.

JI first came to public attention in December 2001, when Singapore's Internal Security Department raided two Islamist cells and discovered detailed plans for bombing attacks against American, Australian, British and Israeli facilities in Singapore. A surveillance tape subsequently found by US authorities in Afghanistan confirmed an al Qaeda connection with this plot. Evidence and interrogations widened the dragnet, uncovering cells in the Philippines and Malaysia.[34] The investigation also uncovered conclusive links to the MILF, where JI recruits were trained in guerrilla tactics and bomb making.

Feeling pressure to carry out a spectacular attack in the wake of expanding arrests, their failure to carry out attacks against "hardened" (diplomatic and military) US, western and Israeli targets in the Philippines and Singapore, and the US-led war against fellow Muslims in Afghanistan, the JI carried out a series of synchronized bomb attacks against

"soft targets" in Bali in October 2002, killing 200 and injuring over 300, mainly Australians and Europeans.[35] They also hoped the attack would cripple the Indonesian economy by disrupting the $7 Billion tourist industry, enabling Muslim parties to replace the secular government of President Megawati Sukarnopurti, while attracting Muslims to join their cause.

Despite a surprisingly vigorous response by the Indonesian government (discussed below), JI is resilient and retains lethal capabilities, as it demonstrated in the August 2003 bombing of the J.W. Marriott in Jakarta and the September 2004 Australian Embassy bombing. A true regional terrorist organization, JI trainers and recruits have been identified in MILF camps in Mindanao and the groups have carried out joint terrorist attacks such as the Dec 2000 Manila bombing. JI also conspires with the ASG, and the two groups are believed to have conspired on a December 2004 bombing in General Santos City in the Philippines.[36]

Thailand

In contrast to Indonesia, Thailand has neither a large Muslim population nor internationally-known *jihadist* groups. The 3.2 million Muslims living predominantly in the southern Thai provinces of Yala, Pattani and Narathiwat comprise less than 5 percent of the overall population. This small size and the remoteness of these provinces from the central government in Bangkok are the primary sources of Muslim rage: long-standing neglect by the central government. The economy of the south has consistently lagged behind the rest of the country in terms of development and investment. Narathiwat is the poorest province in the country with a poverty rate of 46.5% and Yala's poverty rate is

38%.[37] Government funding for health care, education and welfare has also lagged behind the rest of the nation.

While there is no overt discrimination against Muslims in this overwhelmingly Buddhist nation, many Muslims feel the government does not adequately reflect or represent their culture or their needs. In addition to the economy, the Muslim community has complained about limited available domestic religious education facilities and that the Thai Ministry of Education gives academic recognition to only a handful of Islamic universities abroad, making it difficult for returning graduates to find work.[38] Like other Southeast Asian countries, lack of public funded education led many Muslim families to turn to private, Wahhabi-oriented *pondocs* (Muslim schools in Thailand) for their children, swelling the ranks of radicalized Muslims in the south. Kavi Chongkittavorn estimates there are over 5,000 Wahhabis living in the south, and the Wahhabist Yala College of Islam graduates at least 200 annually.[39] Beyond religion, ethnicity also contributes to feelings of discrimination, as most "Thai" Muslims are actually ethnically Malay.

These long-standing grievances continue to fuel a decades-old secessionist movement in the south. Groups such as the **Pattani United Liberation Organization (PULO)** and the **Barisan Revolusi Nasional (National Revolutionary Front (BRN)** emerged during this period, alleging Bangkok "illegally incorporated" the Muslim south into Thailand 100 years ago and now rules it with "colonial repression". [40] This movement was exceptionally violent from the 1940s until the 1980s, when the government dropped its policies of forced assimilation and allowed Thai Muslims to take part in politics.[41]

Southern Thailand remained relatively peaceful until 2002, when attacks against government and business targets in the south increased. The government attributed them to criminal gangs in the area until January 2004, when a series of coordinated raids in the South led to the theft of large quantities of arms. This was followed in April 28th by a simultaneous assault on 12 police and army posts in the three southern provinces. Over 108 attackers were killed. The cries of "Allah-hu Akbar", the Islamist literature found on the dead and the religious teachers found among the casualties provided incontrovertible evidence that this was the work of Muslim radicals.[42] Subsequent interrogations revealed the attack was part of a renewed separatist movement in the south, possibly led by the BRN or a splinter group of PULO and assisted by Malaysian Islamist groups.[43] Since the April attacks, Muslim separatists in the south have waged an incessant campaign of terror bombings, drive-by assassinations, arson attacks against schools and government buildings. Since January 2004, more than 250 people have been killed in violence in the southern province, including Buddhist monks, school teachers, policemen, and local officials.

While there are currently no known links between the violence in the south and regional or international terror groups, Thailand is indeed affected by transnational terrorism. Thailand's lax immigration policies and porous borders made it an easy transient point for JI and Al Qaeda operatives. US, Australian, and Singaporean intelligence sources repeatedly warned the Thai government that al Qaeda and JI were using Thailand as a transient point, meeting place, and as a sanctuary. For example, JI Operations Chief Hambali held a meeting of JI lieutenants in Bangkok in January 2002, where planning for future terrorist attacks including the Bali bombing occurred. Hambali

also used Thailand as a safe haven, as evidenced by his capture in Ayutthya in August

2003.[44]

Chapter 4

The Al-Qaeda Connection

Whenever a jihad is in force, their network provides money and weapons and all tools needed for the jihad, and they mobilize fighters to go to the jihad area.

—Al Chaidar (Darul Islam)

For nearly 15 years, al-Qaeda has penetrated Southeast Asia by establishing links with indigenous terrorist groups, providing financial and technical assistance, training their recruits in its camps in Afghanistan, and coordinating joint terrorist operations.

The roots of these links date back to Afghanistan, when Southeast Asian Muslims fought along side the *Mujahadeen*. Many stayed on in al-Qaeda camps after the war or returned home to form their own *madrassas*. Some *jihadis,* such as Abdulrajik Janjalani, formed their own Muslim separatist groups. Others such as Abu Bakar Bashir did not personally fight in the *jihad* but developed personal ties with Osama Bin Ladin by providing recruits for the Afghan war. The result was a sinister *jihadi* "band of brothers", a global mutual support network for furthering radical Islam.

Besides the bonds of *jihad* linking Southeast Asian terrorists to al-Qaeda, Bin Laden had other motivations for expanding operations in to the region. Regional expert Zachary Abuza labeled Southeast Asia "countries of convenience" making them an attractive "back office" of operations for several reasons:[45] First, the size and geography of many of these nations (Indonesia, for example, is comprised of 17,000 islands), combined with

limited police, military and intelligence capabilities limits government control over vast regions of their own territory. Additionally, corruption is rampant in the region, enabling al-Qaeda and other groups to buy off local police and military commanders.[46] This enables terrorists to train and operate in some remote regions with relative impunity, partially replacing the Afghan camps lost in 2001.

Second, the importance of tourism to these countries' economies led to lax immigration standards to draw Middle Eastern tourists to exotic, yet Muslim, locations such as Indonesia or Malaysia. Until recently, Malaysia did not have any visa requirements for citizens of other Muslim states, and the Philippines had no computerized means to track immigrants and visitors.[47] Porous borders also make transit to and between these countries, especially Indonesia and the Philippines easy.

Third, lax financial regulation, especially for Islamic banks and charities, facilitates covert fund transfers, money laundering, and the establishment of front companies. Former al-Qaeda member Jamal Ahmed Al-Fadl said Bin Laden frequently used Islamic Banks in Malaysia.[48] Additionally, there are extensive *hawala* networks between the Middle East and Southeast Asia, allowing money to be transferred quickly, discreetly and with no paper trail.

Fourth, vast supplies of weapons, either manufactured by Southeast Asian countries or left over from insurgencies in Cambodia and Thailand, are available on the black market. Corrupt police and army officers are also known to sell arms directly to their erstwhile enemies. In 2003, for example, the body of a slain ASG commander was found wearing new night vision goggles provided by the US to the Philippine Armed Forces.[49]

Finally, the large Muslim population coupled with growing Islamic consciousness, of this region gives al-Qaeda a potentially inexhaustible supply of *jihadis* and sympathizers. This pool has almost certainly been enlarged by the perceived "US war against Islam" and daily images of Muslims suffering in Palestine.   While the vast majority of Southeast Asian Muslims do not support terrorism, al-Qaeda must find comfort in recent opinion polls that show less than 15% of Indonesians have a positive image of the US, and almost 60% who believe the Global War on Terror is actually a war against Islam.[50]   Perhaps even more ominous was an online survey in the daily newspaper *Media Indonesia*, where the majority of the 2,400 respondents believed that Bin Laden was a "justice fighter" and less than 35 percent viewed him as a terrorist.[51]

The environment created by these factors made it natural for al-Qaeda to expand its tentacles into Southeast Asia. One of the earliest manifestations of these links was with the ASG. Abdulrajak Janjalani met Bin Laden in Afghanistan and was motivated to form a violent splinter group when he returned from *jihad*.[52]   Bin Laden's Brother-in-Law, Mohammad Jamal Khalifa, moved to the region and established funding conduits for both the ASG and MILF through a *zakat* charity organization.   Later, al-Qaeda sent Ramsi Yousef, mastermind of the first World Trade Center bombing, to the Philippines, where he trained ASG rebels in bomb making and established an independent al-Qaeda cell in the Philippines. Through this cell, he hatched Oplan Bojinka, a plan to down eleven US aircraft over the Pacific in "48 hours of terror".[53]   Only a chance explosion and alert police work averted the attack. While Yousef's cell was shut down, investigators failed to identify the al-Qaeda connection including Yousef's and Khalifa's ties with

Khalid Sheikh Mohammad, Al-Qaeda's operations officer and architect of the September 11th attacks.

Like the ASG, the roots of the MILF's contact with al Qaeda also date back to the Afghan *jihad*, when the MILF sent an estimated 500-700 Filipino Muslims to fight with the Mujahadeen. The expense of sending and sustaining these fighters in Afghanistan coupled with concerns over a funding cutoff from its longtime patrons, Libya and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, led the MILF to turn to al-Qaeda for funding.[54] In addition to finances, the MILF also received training support from al-Qaeda, initially in Afghanistan but later in Mindanao, especially after Pakistan began to clamp down on foreign *jihadis* using their country as a transit point. Philippine intelligence reported seeing an increasing number of "middle eastern looking" individuals in MILF camps, and in mid-2000 soldiers found the bodies of several Arab and Pakistani men at an MILF base they captured.[55]

Al-Qaeda placed trainers in MILF camps not just for the Moro groups, but for other *jihadis* from the region such as Jemaah Islamiyyah. While JI and al-Qaeda are separate organizations with often differing goals, there is a greater level of cooperation between these two groups than any other in Southeast Asia. The two networks often overlap in membership such as JI operations chief Hambali, who was also one of the few non-Arab members of Al-Qaeda's *shura,* its top decision-making body. The groups also share training camps in Mindanao, and jointly plan operations. One such example was a planning meeting held in January 2000 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, attended by al-Qaeda and several JI lieutenants, where planning for the USS Cole and September 11th attacks occurred.[56] Similarly, al-Qaeda provided technical expertise for planning the Bali

bombing and other proposed attacks against the US and Israeli Embassies in Manila. Al Qaeda even dispatched four Arab suicide bombers to Southeast Asia as part of a JI-al-Qaeda plot to destroy the US, British, Australian and Israeli targets in Singapore in 2001.[57]

Chapter 5

Regional Approaches to Combating Terror

The worst thing that can happen to a terrorist is to be deprived of his cause, to be disrobed of his moral pretensions, to become irrelevant to the lives of those he claims to champion.

— Indonesian Foreign Minister N. Hassan Wirajuda[58]

The complacency many Southeast Asian states felt toward the threat of Islamic terrorism was jarred by the September 11th attacks and the discovery of Jemaah Islamiyah as a regional terrorist group. Any lingering denial they may have felt was shattered by the 2002 Bali bombing and subsequent exposure of links between its perpetrators and virtually all Southeast Asian countries. However, internal factors such as domestic constituencies, government stability, limited military, police and intelligence capabilities, and their relations with external powers such as the US influenced their willingness and ability to combat terror. Similarly, the nature and composition of regional security organizations such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) also affect their ability to suppress regional terrorist groups.

State-Level Responses

Philippines

The Philippine government of President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo wasted no time in joining the Global War on Terror. Capitalizing on negotiations with the US for assistance in dealing

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with rebels in the south, talks which predated September 11th, President Arroyo offered the US logistics and over flight rights for the war in Afghanistan and requested US military advisory support in dealing with the ASG. In adopting this strategy, Arroyo hoped to improve relations with the US which had been frayed since America withdrew its forces from the Philippines in 1991, garner economic and military aid from the US, defeat Muslim separatists as a prelude to a lasting peace, end the use of the Philippines as a base of operations for international terror, and to consolidate her tenuous grip on power.[59]

The US responded in 2002 by deploying over 600 advisors to the Southern Philippines. Under the framework of an annual joint exercise, Balikatan 02-1, advisors trained Philippine Armed Forces (AFP) troops in anti-terrorist tactics and intelligence gathering techniques. Additionally, the US provided over $100 million in military equipment, including small arms, body armor, night-vision goggles, helicopters, patrol boats and transport aircraft. Overall, the joint exercise was successful, as dozens of ASG rebels, including key regional commanders, were either captured or killed.[60]

Unfortunately, the effects of this operation have been diluted by a lack of persistence by the Philippine government and the US. Plans for a larger, more ambitious Balikatan were developed for 2003, which would have included 350 Special Operations Forces along with 400 support troops, all backed by a Marine quick-reaction force of 1000 troops, attack helicopters, and Harrier jets. Unlike the previous exercise, planning included direct US participation in combat operations for an indefinite time period.[61] While President Arroyo and her military commanders enthusiastically supported the plan, rival politicians and the Philippine media condemned the plan as a violation of the Philippine constitution, which bans foreign combat troops from operating inside the country. Unable to agree on a compromise with a more limited US role,

plans were scaled back to training of several Philippine Army battalions and enhancing Filipino law enforcement and intelligence capabilities.[62] Consequently, while the AFP continues to hunt ASG rebels at a reduced intensity, the ASG has been able to reconstitute itself and recruit new followers (aided by their portrayal as victims of the war against Islam). More importantly, the ASG continues to conduct terrorist attacks, such as the February 14, 2005 simultaneous bombings in Manila's financial district and two southern towns which killed eight people and wounded over 100.

Besides military pressure, the Arroyo government is also trying to address the key underlying cause of Muslim unrest: poverty and unemployment. The government is channeling as much external funding as it can raise (largely from official development aid) into public health, basic education, and physical infrastructure in the southern Philippines. While this is a step in the right direction, more needs to be done. There will never be a chance for lasting peace as long as the region has the highest rates of poverty in an already poor country. The government must allocate additional funds for the south, which currently receives the lowest budgetary allocations (approximately $210 million), despite accounting for about one-third of the total area of the Philippines.[63]

The Arroyo government has also aggressively targeted al-Qaeda and JI cells in the Philippines. Working with US and Singaporean intelligence agencies, the Philippine National Police broke up a suspected al-Qaeda sleeper cell in November 2001, shut down a JI/Al-Qaeda cell led by expert bomb-maker Fathur Rohman al-Ghozi in January 2002, and in March 2002 arrested three Indonesians for possession of bomb-making materials.[64] The government has also established a computerized immigration system and passed anti-money laundering legislation to make the Philippines less attractive to terrorists.

Despite these successes, the Philippines remains vulnerable to Islamic terrorism. The AFP, police and intelligence services are woefully under funded, as are development projects in Muslim region. Most importantly, the government's unwillingness to confront the MILF enables the group to continue to train ASG, JI and Al-Qaeda in its camps in Mindanao. Finally, the leaders of the ASG and MILF are still at large and capable of planning and conducting coordinated operations with each other or external terrorist groups.[65]

Indonesia

Indonesia contrasted the Philippine's aggressive confrontation of the terrorist threat with a policy of denial and indecision. While former President Megawati was the first world leader to travel to the US and express solidarity following September 11th, her government refused to participate in the war and even condemned the US-led war in Afghanistan as an act of aggression. Moreover, her government steadfastly refused to admit Indonesia may have indigenous terrorists and even denied the existence of Jemaah Islamiyah. The Bali bombing ended any such illusions.

In fairness, President Megawati's options were more constrained than President Arroyo's as she had a much larger Islamic constituency to contend with. The majority of the population opposed the US war of Afghanistan, and was wildly critical of the subsequent invasion of Iraq. Therefore, Megawati had to avoid any appearance that she was leading Indonesia into the US-led war against Islam. Additionally, after becoming Indonesia's third president in as many years following the impeachment of her predecessor, Megawati's grip on power was tenuous at best. While she had the support of the Indonesian military (TNI), she faced significant opposition from Islamic parties in Parliament and from her own vice president. Finally, Indonesia's primary security concern at the turn of the century was not terrorism but separatist movements. The loss

of East Timor in 1999, sectarian violence in the Malukus, and a violent conflict with Muslim separatists in Aceh led President Megawati to warn that Indonesia "could easily disintegrate into a 'Balkans of the Eastern Hemisphere'".[66]

Bali provided a catalyst for government to move against JI. Thanks to an unexpectedly impressive performance the National Police Force, with the help of the Australian Federal Police, quickly identified the key perpetrators including Imam Samudra and Mukhlas, who succeeded Hambali as JI's operations officer. Additionally, the police collected evidence that the Bali bombings were related to the 2000 church bombings and the Philippine Ambassador's residence, all allegedly masterminded by Hambali.[67] More importantly, the investigation uncovered links between the bombers and JI's leader, Bashir.

Only after this evidence came to light did the government feel secure enough to arrest Bashir as the head of JI. Although several convicted Bali conspirators implicated Bashir, the government still moved hesitantly against the popular Islamic leader, charging him only with involvement in earlier plots for which he received a four year sentence (later commuted to two).[68] Bashir was not charged with the Bali bombing until May 2004, and when convicted in March 2005, he received only an additional 2.5 years.[69] In neither trial was he convicted of being the head of a terrorist organization, which could have resulted in the death penalty

Bali also prompted the government to strengthen its legal avenues to deal with terrorists. Then-President Megawati issued two emergency decrees allowing the police to detain suspected terrorists without trial, authorize the death penalty for terrorist acts, and allow intelligence reports to be used as evidence. Indonesia also enacted money laundering legislation and set up a financial intelligence unit.[70] However, many other governmental obstacles remain.

One such impediment is bureaucratic infighting and lack of coordination between the various government intelligence services. The TNI's intelligence service, the BAIS, is the largest and best-equipped intelligence service in the country. However, in Indonesia terrorism is viewed primarily as a law enforcement issue and thus the TNI and its intelligence arm play a minor role. The police, formerly a part of the military, are now an independent entity and no longer have access to military intelligence reports. The State Intelligence Agency (BIN) is tasked to coordinate intelligence information between security services, but the police were unable to make arrests based on BIN information.[71] In a situation eerily similar to the problems cited in the US intelligence apparatus by the 9/11 Commission, lack of proper intelligence coordination can have tragic results.

This problem became manifest in August 2003, when the J.W. Marriott bombing in Jakarta killed 12 people. The police once again performed admirably in the wake of the disaster, identifying key perpetrators and JI masterminds within a month. However, the fact that the bombing occurred at all despite all security precautions and intercepted intelligence that an attack would occur underlines the weaknesses in Indonesia's security mechanism.[72]

While the successful investigations following the Bali, Marriott, and Embassy bombings are impressive, and the numerous arrests of JI leaders throughout Southeast Asia have certainly weakened the terrorist organization, Indonesia still faces a significant threat from JI. Many key JI leaders remain at large, and the short prison sentences given to some JI chiefs such as Bashir may only embolden their followers. Both intelligence and regional experts report JI has been able to replace many of its fallen leaders, and is still actively recruiting in the *madrassas* and universities, tapping into the vast pool of angry, disenfranchised youth with bleak employment

prospects.[73] Finally, JI has not abandoned its goal of a pan-Islamic state governed by *shariah*, a goal incompatible with the continuance of secular democracy.

Thailand

Like Indonesia, Thailand was in denial of its terrorist problem until Hambali was arrested in 2003. The relative calm in the south from 2001-2003 also led Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra to believe Thailand was a haven <u>from</u> terrorism. Any lingering delusions were dashed after the April 28th attacks in the south. Unfortunately, the government's heavy-handed response to this attack has fueled smoldering Muslim resentment, which threatens to turn southern Thailand into another land of *jihad*.

The killing of 32 Muslims holed up in the Krue Se Mosque in Pattani during the April 28th attacks led to a summer of protests and bombings. These culminated in another massacre when on October 25th, police opened fire on a crowd of 1300 demonstrators outside a police station in Tai Bak in Narathiwat, killing six demonstrators. Another 72 of those arrested later died when they were stacked like cordwood on the back of army trucks, suffocating those on the bottom.[74]

In response to escalating violence, Prime Minister Thaksin ordered a crackdown on Muslim rebels. In January 2005, police arrested six prominent Muslim religious leaders and charged them with supporting separatist organizations and inciting rebellion, which only escalated the violence. Thaksin then ordered a second infantry division into the region, raising the number of troops in the region from 20,000 to 34,000.[75] The government also announced the division of the south into "green", "yellow" and "red" zones based on the level of violence and degree of sympathy for the separatists. According to its plan villages classified as "red" (which comprise about 56% of the villages in Yala, Pattani, and Narathiwat) would receive less government development aid and would have more soldiers deployed there.[76]

This perceived heavy handed policy has received criticism from the Thai Parliament, the media, and even the King, who advised Thaksin to "ensure delicacy and fairness in handling the south's deep-seated grievances."[77] As a result, the government is now trying a softer approach, using small groups of soldiers to work on development projects. Thaksin also created a National Reconciliation Panel led by respected former Prime Minister Anand Panyarchun to find a new strategy towards a long-term solution for the south.[78] While it is too soon to tell whether this panel will help end the violence in southern Thailand, any solution that does not address the economic disadvantages, omnipresent security forces, perceived second-class citizen status, and lack of at least some political and religious autonomy will not succeed.

Regional cooperation

The nature of regional and international terrorist groups, operating in multiple countries with weak security and financial institutions and porous borders, makes it virtually impossible for any single country to defend itself. For example, the foiled terrorist attack in Singapore in 2001 envisaged cooperation between JI elements in Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines as well as al-Qaeda operatives from the region and abroad.[79] To defeat JI and al-Qaeda, Southeast Asian countries need to increase cooperation and information sharing. This can be a difficult thing to ask among countries that have historically viewed each other as rivals and competitors, but cooperation is essential to prevent future attacks.

Currently, the most important and successful form of regional cooperation is bilateral intelligence exchanges. Such cooperation has led to important breakthroughs, such as the arrest of JI/al-Qaeda bomb maker al-Ghozi in the Philippines based on intelligence provided by Singapore. Singaporean intelligence was also responsible for the arrest of JI members Afrin Ali by Thai authorities and Mas Selemat Kastari in Indonesia.[80]

Southeast Asian states are also cooperating with each other through the handover of suspected terrorists. Hambali's wife, who was involved in several Islamic charities that supported JI, was turned over to Malaysia by Thailand. Malaysia also turned over JI recruiter and senior operative Abu Jabril to Indonesia.[81] However, these transfers are handled on an ad hoc basis, as there are no regional extradition agreements. Selemat, for example was not turned over to Singapore.[82]

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)

A truly effective regional security organization is essential for a coherent regional approach to fighting terror. Unfortunately, the ASEAN in its current form falls short of this goal. Founded in 1967 to reduce bilateral tensions and stabilize the region in the wake of Communist insurgencies, ASEAN sought to build regional security by strengthening the "national resilience" (nation building) of individual states. To allow individual states to pursue nation building unimpeded by external meddling, the Westphalian principle of national sovereignty became the bedrock of organization.[83] ASEAN was therefore established to ensure insure national sovereignty through a policy of mutual respect for political independence and territorial integrity and the non-interference in the internal affairs of one another, which became known as the "ASEAN Way".[84] Additionally, ASEAN operates on a consensus policy, meaning that any one of the ten states can prevent the organization from acting on an issue by dissenting.

These principles of non-interference and consensus limit ASEAN's ability to fight terror. While it has issued statements condemning terrorist attacks in the US, Philippines and Indonesia, committing its members to countering and preventing terrorist attacks, and enhancing intelligence exchanges on terrorists, it has yet to take concrete steps to put these pledges into action.[85] ASEAN has also developed an action plan to combat transnational crime and a

statement of measures to combat terrorist financing, but most of this coordination still only exists on paper.[86] The consensus principle prevented the organization from supporting US military action in Afghanistan and could not even agree on a definition of terrorism.

The principle of non-interference has proven an even bigger obstacle. For example, Bashir was wanted by Malaysia and Singapore for JI-related terrorist activities. President Megawati, refused to arrest him until after the Bali attack, largely out of fear of domestic unrest, and ASEAN was powerless to interfere. ASEAN's action plan to combat terrorism, rather than implementing a regional response, essentially empowers individual states to take its own actions against terrorists.[87] ASEAN has also declined taking a direct role in developing a regional intelligence sharing mechanism, deferring instead to individual states to develop multiple, redundant "regional" counter-terrorism centers.

That is not to say that ASEAN is a completely feckless organization in the war on terror. The ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on Transnational Crime (AMMTC) provides a useful vehicle to exchange information and share best practices in investigating terrorist groups.[88] The ASEAN Chiefs of Police (ASEANPOL) have also taken concrete steps to share information on terrorists and other transnational criminals by developing a shared electronic database that should become operational in late 2005.[89] However, ASEAN needs to take additional steps, such as greater intelligence exchange through a regional information "clearing house", coordinated surveillance of terrorists and terrorist groups, establishing regional extradition procedures, and perhaps even relaxing the non-interference rule to enable ASEAN to pressure member states in order to be a more effective counter-terror organization.

ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)

The ARF has the potential to be an effective organization to fight transnational terror as it brings together not only ASEAN, but 13 other countries including the US, Australia, China and Russia. This provides external powers an opportunity to share best practices and hold workshops on counter-terrorist techniques.[90] However, it is limited by the same ASEAN principles of non-interference and consensus which limits its effectiveness.

Chapter 6

The US Response

We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge. In the world we have entered, the only path to safety is the path of action. And this nation will act..

<div align="right">

—President George W. Bush, June 1, 2002

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The National Strategy for Combating Terrorism (NSCT) seeks to stop terrorist attacks against the United States and ultimately to create an international environment "inhospitable" for future terrorists and their supporters. To fulfill these objectives, the NSCT proposes the following actions, known as the "4-D" strategy. First, the US and its allies must **defeat** terrorism by attacking their sanctuaries and support networks. Second, the US intends to **deny** sponsorship and sanctuary to terrorists by ensuring other states take action to combat terrorism in their own lands and regions. Third, the US seeks to **diminish** the underlying conditions that foster repression, resentment and terror. Finally, the US must proactively **defend** its homeland and interests, both at home and abroad. [91]

Applying this strategy in Southeast Asia will require a great deal of finesse, incentives and cooperation with both individual nations and regional forums. With military and political commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US will not be able to devote a great deal of political or military capital in Southeast Asia for the foreseeable future. Given America's poor public image among predominantly Muslim countries in the region, a large US combat presence would probably not be welcome anyway, and

would only serve to incite further radicalism. Therefore, the US must work through key allies, rely on discreet use of US military power and maximize use of other policy instruments to achieve the objective of the "4-D" strategy.

Defeating Terrorist Organizations

According to the NSCT, the first step in defeating terrorist organization is to use intelligence and law enforcement entities to identify and locate terrorists and share this information within our own government and with our allies.[92] The importance of collecting and sharing intelligence is underscored by the fact that many captured JI and al-Qaeda terrorists have provided information that led to further arrests and foiled attacks.[93] In the Pacific, the US initially had to play "intelligence catch-up" on regional terrorists, as the long-standing regional focus of the national and theater intelligence entities was on China and North Korea. However, a collaborative effort by the Defense Intelligence Agency, CIA, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, a massive "tiger team" formed at the US Pacific Command's (PACOM) Joint Intelligence Center Pacific (JICPAC), and by Australian and Singaporean intelligence services quickly filled key information gaps and enabled national and theater-level leadership to make informed decisions. JICPAC's tiger team soon evolved into a permanent Transnational Threats Operational Intelligence Cell (TROIC) to provide actionable counter-terrorist intelligence directly to deployed forces.

Intelligence sharing is a more difficult issue, as it is severely restricted beyond long-standing allies such as the United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. During counter-terrorism operations in the Philippines, however, many of these restrictions were eased and information was passed from JICPAC and the PACOM staff directly to the deployed

Joint Task Force (JTF). The JTF then shared relevant information with the Philippine army and police forces which facilitated the capture and killing of several ASG leaders.[94]

While this ad hoc intelligence sharing mechanism has worked successfully, there is much room for improvement. First, information sharing needs to move beyond the "on the fly" distribution and become formalized. An automated intelligence server populated with unclassified and "releasable" classified information would provide the US and its allies with a common picture of the terrorist threat. Such systems already exist to share intelligence with other allies such as Australia and South Korea, and similar systems could easily be made available to our allies in the War on Terror. Second, given the shortfall of linguists in the DoD and national intelligence community today, the US should team with regional intelligence services for rapid translation and captured document exploitation. Finally, these agencies need to work together to cultivate human intelligence sources that can infiltrate and report on planning and operation within these cells.

Law Enforcement agencies also play an active role in gathering and sharing information on regional terrorists. The Joint Terrorism Task Force-Pacific (JTTF), comprised of representatives from the FBI, Defense and State Departments, CIA, US Marshals, Secret Service and other government agencies, coordinates sharing of anti- and counter-terrorist data within the US government and with regional law enforcement agencies. Focusing on groups that have been indicted by the US for attacks against Americans such as the ASG and JI, the JTTF gathers and shares information with regional law enforcement to facilitate capture and prosecution of suspected terrorists.

Just as important, the JTTF uses its regional contacts to identify and prevent potential terrorist attacks against the US and its interests.[95]

While the JTTF and the addition of Legal Attaches at Us Embassies abroad have improved law enforcement cooperation, there is still room for improvement, For instance, federal regulations require law enforcement information developed by the justice department and intelligence data obtained by the CIA or DoD to be kept on separate computer servers, preventing a single-source repository for classified counter-terrorist data. Additionally, information sharing between the US and Southeast Asian countries has frequently been criticized as a one-way street. For instance, the US has refused to extradite or provide access to its top-level detainees such as Hambali. This was cited by the Indonesian Government as a contributing factor in its "weak" case against Bashir and the resulting light sentence for his crimes. To enhance trust and cooperation with its partners on the War on Terror, the US must be more forthcoming with its prisoners and interrogation results.

Once terrorist have been identified and located, the NSCT calls for the US and its allies to use every tool to disrupt dismantle and destroy their capacity to conduct acts of terror.[96] The most vivid example of this effort in Southeast Asia was the deployment of a JTF consisting primarily of Special Operations Forces to the Southern Philippines. While not permitted to participate in combat operations, the JTF provided forward-based training and, through reachback intelligence from JICPAC and other collection assets, actionable information that enabled the AFP to kill or capture dozens of ASG terrorists.

The US has also provided direct to support to Thai counter-terrorism operations. The CIA reportedly has a continuous presence in Bangkok's Counter-Terrorism

Intelligence Center (CTIC) and has provided between $10 and $15 million to support the center's operations. This relationship reaped benefits as intelligence sharing contributed to the capture of several JI leaders, including Hambali.[97].

A key facilitator in the US' War on Terror in the Pacific is PACOM's Joint Interagency Coordination Group for Counter-Terrorism (JIACG/CT). Staffed by military intelligence, operations, planning and training officers along with representatives from CIA, the State, Treasury and Justice Departments, and the FBI, the JIACG acts as a "permanent tiger team" whose mission is to synchronize and coordinate counter-terrorist activities throughout PACOM's area of responsibility.[98] A true one-stop shop for supporting counter-terror operations, its responsibilities range from coordinating real-time intelligence and planning support for deployed Joint Task Forces to developing PACOM's comprehensive theater counter-terrorism plan. The JIACG/CT also works closely with regional embassies and the FBI's in-theater Legislative Attaches to synchronize use or all policy instruments in fighting terror. Additionally it coordinates with the JTTF on intelligence gleaned from interviews and interrogations. This in formation is used in turn to develop targets for lethal and non-lethal strikes.[99]

Denying Terrorists Sponsorship and Sanctuary

Beyond defeating terrorist cells, the NSCT seeks to choke off the terrorists' lifeblood by denying them sponsorship, support, and sanctuary by nations or their citizens. The strategy outlines a three-fold strategy of pressuring states to fulfill their international obligations to combat terror, providing assistance to states who are willing to combat terror but do not have the means, and to compel unwilling states to change their policies. Fortunately, no Southeast Asian nation or organization has been completely unwilling to

combat terrorism. Malaysia and Singapore have aggressively pursued terrorists within their borders and the Philippines has tried to combat the ASG threat. Other states, such as Indonesia, have been more reluctant to overtly take on groups such as JI, largely for internal political reasons. The US has used quiet diplomacy, along with offers of development and financial aid to try to persuade them. The Bush Administration provided $16 million in counter-terrorism assistance to Indonesia in 2002, and worked with other governments to reschedule almost $5.5 billion of its international debt.[100] This plan yielded limited results, such as the handover of senior al-Qaeda operative Omar al-Faruq to the US in 2002.[101] Unfortunately, it took to Bali bombing for Indonesia to become more cooperative.

By far, the greatest weight of US effort in combating terror in Southeast Asia is in strengthening countries' ability to fight terrorists themselves. Since 2002, the US has provided Indonesia with an additional $19 million in security assistance, including funds for training and equipping a national police counter-terrorism unit.[102] In addition to the financial outlays, the FBI also provided intelligence and expertise supporting police anti-terror investigations while the Treasury Department helped create a financial intelligence unit and trained analysts in money-laundering detection. Most importantly, the US recently removed restrictions on the TNI's ability to purchase spare parts and equipment and on US-Indonesian joint military training, a more that will hopefully enhance both the TNI's professionalism and its counter-terror fighting abilities.[103]

The Philippines have reaped even greater benefits from its cooperation with the US. Besides the $100 million in military aid discussed above, the US provided an additional $25 million in security assistance in 2004 and requested $30 million this year from

Congress.[104] The US also designated the Philippines as a Major Non-NATO Ally, giving Manila even greater access to US defense equipment. The US military continues to provide training for the AFP as part of the annual Balikatan exercise series (albeit on a smaller scale than the 2002 exercise), a new series of "Balance Piston" counter-terror training exercises, or in smaller Joint Combine Exchange Training (JCET) exercises. The FBI has also conducted numerous sessions training Filipino police officers in investigative techniques.[105]

Thailand too was given Major Non-NATO Ally status, in recognition of its long-standing alliance with the US and its quiet support of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. While Thailand has received significantly less security assistance than the Philippines, only $21.25 million from 2002-2004, the US provides almost continuous training for the Thai military and border patrol through annual COBRA GOLD exercises, JCETs and other small training exercises. Much of this training involves counter-insurgency tactics provided by US Special Forces.[106] The FBI also provided sophisticated software to track financial transactions for Bangkok's new anti-money laundering center.[107]

Besides military aid and training, the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) has taken the lead of a JIACG/CT initiative to expand counter-terrorism awareness and training. An in-house Comprehensive Security Responses to Terrorism course draws military and civilian security professionals from the Asia-Pacific region to expand knowledge of terrorist groups as well as interagency and multi-national approaches to combating them.   An even more ambitious program, the Counterterrorism Regional Outreach, intends to create a virtual on-line network of security professionals and institutions such as the Regional Counter-Terrorism Center in Kuala Lumpur. The

goals of this program are to enhance counter-terrorism training in each country, improve information sharing, and establish informal links between military, intelligence, and academic personnel throughout the region, creating a possible foundation for enhanced operational collaboration.[108]

Diminish Underlying Conditions

Diminishing the underlying conditions that breeds terrorism may be the hardest piece of the NSCT for the United States for two reasons. First, it requires the US and its allies "win the war of ideas" to deligitimize terrorism and discredit the radical ideologies that promote it.[109] This is a daunting task in the face of historically low public opinion of US policy (especially after the US invasion of Iraq) and the widely held perception that America is at war with Islam. Second, this public sentiment has led some Southeast Asian nations like Indonesia to publicly distance themselves from the US, making it harder to collaborate on counter-terrorism. Even Thailand, for fear of arousing Muslim rage in the south, refrained from vocally supporting the US Global War on Terror.

While the US should adhere to the strategy of "supporting moderate Muslim regimes" and commitments to secular democratic institutions espoused in the NSCT, it must also move beyond this and wage an aggressive global public diplomacy campaign, to clarify US goals and intent in the War on Terror. This global message should be supplemented by more focused efforts on regions such as Southeast Asia, perhaps expanding the Voice of America's existing Indonesian language broadcasts and adding broadcasts in Javansese and other Indonesian Dialects, as well as Malay and Tagalog.[110] Capitalizing on the explosion of cable and satellite television as well as the internet, the US should seize the initiative back from networks such as al-Jazeera and convey a

coherent message that it is not at war with Islam and articulate America's sacrifices on behalf of Muslims in Bosnia, Kosovo and Kuwait, and the positive ambitions and results of our interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. This message should be contrasted against the arbitrary cruelty of terrorists who slaughtered thousands of innocent *people*, including Muslims, in New York, Madrid, Bali, Manila and Jakarta. The campaign must also confront and debunk the radical Islamists' message that restoration of the Caliphate and *shariah* law are panaceas to Muslim woes by highlighting the failures of theocracies like Iran, Sudan and the Taliban to deliver on their promises.[111] Whenever possible, we must enlist the support of moderate Muslims in speaking out against terrorism and radical Islam, as they will carry far more credibility than the US.

To win the war of ideas, the US must back up these words with deeds showing it is sincerely committed to improving the underlying conditions that nurture terrorism. Much work is already being done in this area. For example, the US is providing Indonesia with $157 million over six years to revitalize Indonesia's public education system, in the hopes that it will promote tolerance, counter extremism, and provide employable skills. The US is also providing Indonesia with $468 million over the next five years for water purification, child nutrition, and the environment.[112]

The US is carrying out similar programs in the Philippines, with $243 million in economic assistance from 2002-2004 and another $91 million requested for 2005.[113] When JTF-510 deployed to the Philippines, over 400 civil affairs personnel accompanied the Special Operations Forces. Working alongside AFP and local contractors, the civil affairs troops built roads, improved airfields and ports and dug fresh water wells for local villages. Joint AFP-JTF-510 personnel also launched "OPERATION SMILES" and

provided medical care for over 18,000 people on Basilan Island.[114]   These efforts helped improve the image of both the Philippine and US governments in the eyes of Moro villagers, some of whom later became informants for the AFP against the ASG.[115]

To effectively combat terror, these economic assistance and public works projects must be complemented by job-creation efforts. The US should work with international agencies to create small and medium-scale businesses to accompany investments in education. Additionally, America should enact economic policies that facilitate job creation in troubled areas, such as increasing imports of Philippine tuna, or Indonesian textiles and shoes.[116]

Perhaps the best demonstration of US good will towards the Muslim world was America's massive response to the December 2004 Tsunami that devastated parts of Indonesia and Thailand. Besides the over $1 billion in government and private donations, the US mobilized an armada to assist in rescue and humanitarian relief in Phuket and Aceh. While conducting the largest relief operation in history, America managed to assuage Indonesian suspicions over US motivations (namely a desire for a permanent American presence in the region), by abiding by the Indonesian government's demands for a small on-shore military presence, ceding overall authority for the relief operation to the UN, and most importantly, withdrawing its combat-capable forces when the crisis ebbed. In doing so, the US took an important step toward rehabilitating its image in the region and improving relations with the Indonesian government.[117]

Finally, US efforts to win the hearts and minds of Muslims in Southeast Asia, as well as the rest of the world, will fail unless the US persists in seeking an equitable solution to the Israeli-Palestine conflict that includes an independent Palestinian state with at least

some foothold in Jerusalem. The Bush administration must seize the historic opportunity presented by the death of Yasir Arafat, the election of Mahmoud Abbas, and the willingness of Ariel Sharon to negotiate a peace settlement with the Palestinians and remain visibly engaged in working out an agreement. Such an accord would douse a primary source of Muslim rage and rallying cry of terrorists throughout the world.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Terrorism cannot be bombed into submission...the underlying legitimate grievances that allow such extremists to gain support must be addressed.

- Malaysian Defense Minister Najib Razak[118]

The United States and Southeast Asia have made significant progress in combating regional terrorists in the past three years. The region is more aware of the terrorist threats within their individual countries as well as the threat to their very existence posed by Jemaah Islamiyah and its desire for a regional Islamic state governed by *shariah* law. They have also been awakened to al-Qaeda's decade-old infiltration into the region, its efforts to foster ties with regional jihadists and to use their countries as a safe, convenient back office for planning and executing its global *jihad*.

All Southeast Asian countries have taken some steps, within the constraints of their governments and often unsupportive populations, to identify and eliminate terrorism within their borders. Though limited intelligence sharing between countries, dozens of JI and other terrorists have been arrested or killed. Many planned attacks throughout the region have been thwarted, most notably the attempted 2001 bombings in Singapore and the planned 2002 attacks in Manila. When attacks such as Bali occurred, law enforcement agencies demonstrated impressive professionalism and resourcefulness in rounding up perpetrators. With a little help from the US and Australia, they have

improved oversight over their finance systems making the region less attractive for al-Qaeda money laundering.

The US has also enjoyed some success in combating terror. After an extended period of benign neglect of the region dating back to the end of the Vietnam War and the withdrawal of the US military from Clark Airbase and Subic Bay in 1991, America has reestablished close military ties with the Philippines and, more recently with Indonesia. This relationship with the Philippines enabled Manila to dent the ASG's terror making capability by improving its counter-terrorism training and skills. Recognizing a large combat presence in Thailand and Indonesia is neither welcome nor necessary, the US has relied on other instruments of power to help fight terror. Intelligence sharing, law enforcement training and educational outreach programs have all helped to deny terrorists a sanctuary to plan and carry out attacks. This soft power approach has enabled America to remain engaged in the region without further inflaming anti-US sentiment. As a result, relations with regional governments have improved since 2003, and our efforts in alleviating the suffering caused by the recent Tsunami have earned us a brief window of good will amongst the regional population.

To achieve the goals of the National Strategy for Combating Terror, the US must exploit this brief window of opportunity to further diminish the terrorists' capability and support base within the region. While intelligence cooperation has improved markedly since 2001, greater cooperation is needed. The US must continue to work with regional allies to strengthen their military, law enforcement, and financial control systems to reduce its attractiveness to al-Qaeda. Most importantly, the US needs to improve its public diplomacy program to win the "war of ideas" against radical Islam.

While these steps will help reduce the threat of terror, they will be for naught unless the US, the affected countries, and regional organizations such as ASEAN seriously address the underlying conditions that breed terrorists. It begins with education, by regulating the curriculum in the *madrassas* and providing more funding for public education. Education has to be tied to economic opportunity, as the 40 million unemployed people in Indonesia alone provide a fertile recruiting ground for JI and al-Qaeda. The US and other world economic must work with these countries to create more jobs and to help find a market for their products. Third, the US and Southeast Asian nations must work to provide better schools, roads, safe drinking water and improved heath care to the disenfranchised groups. Fourth, the governments of this region must tackle the legitimate grievances of these Muslim groups, giving maximum autonomy without undermining national unity. Finally, while these steps <u>may</u> help reduce the violence caused by radical Islam in Southeast Asia, the US and its partners must remember that terrorism is like a cancer: While it is possible contain it, vigilance will always be needed to keep the malignancy from reemerging.

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